

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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Soviet Attitudes toward Political Problems

1. It is difficult, of course, to estimate the percentage of the Soviet population which opposed or supported the present regime. However, it is safe to assume that many would be very happy to see the present government replaced. Almost all of the older generation, the religiously devout, and persons who had lived abroad were opposed to the regime, although, of course, they kept their thoughts to themselves except in the company of a small circle of trusted friends. there were additional elements both at the top and bottom of Soviet society who were opposed to the present Soviet government. Of the remainder, the mass of workers and the younger generation, perhaps only 50 percent were advocates of the Communist regime.

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2. It is well to keep in mind that there was hardly a family or person in the Soviet Union who had not been directly or indirectly affected by the oppressive measures of the Soviet police state. A Soviet chemist who enjoyed a responsible position at Institute 88 was typical of several Soviet citizens [redacted] 25X1
- [redacted] father and several brothers or sisters had been arrested during a purge in the 1930's and had never been heard of since. Only the chemist and his mother remained. They openly expressed their hatred of the system and of individual communists. There are undoubtedly countless others like them.
3. [redacted] in 1948 at the time of the American presidential election. This man said, "If they would only let us have free elections, and if Truman and Stalin were the two candidates, then 90% of the Soviet people would vote for Truman". 25X1
4. On the other hand, there were certain achievements or aspects of Soviet society which were regarded with pride by the majority of the Soviet population. Lenin was loved and respected, almost deified by most Soviets. Many people who were not Communists or supporters of the government agreed with the bookkeeper at Institute 88 who said that "If Lenin had lived, everything would have been better", when criticizing the cruelty of Stalin's police.
5. Many Soviet citizens, especially young people, were proud of and believed in Soviet claims of Russian and Soviet priorities in certain inventions and technical advances. This point should be treated with discretion by Western propagandists. Many people were also proud of the Moscow subway and the large construction projects undertaken in the capital city in post-war years. However, it would be a relatively simple task for Western propagandists to point out that public funds could have been used more sensibly for workers' housing than for the subway's lavish decorations. 25X1
6. [redacted] rarely heard any open criticism of Stalin by the local Soviet population. [redacted] often heard remarks to the effect that "If Lenin had lived, things would have been better" indicates that Stalin was disliked by the average Soviet. 25X1
7. Similarly, there was no direct criticism of the Communist Party as an institution by Soviet citizens, as no one dared to do so. However, suggestive statements made by many Soviet workers and technicians, as well as their general behavior, indicated that party members were generally looked upon as big shots (Bonzen) by non-party members and were disliked as such. It is noteworthy that non-party members seldom mingled with party members and remained within their own social circles.

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The former probably stood their distance out of discretion and fear -- fear that they might be considered as politically unreliable by members of the Party.

8. Soviet employees [redacted] never spoke of the MGB when referring to the secret police but used the term MVD or NKVD. It was their universal desire to stay as far away from MVD personnel as possible, especially those engaged in uncovering supposedly subversive elements. Although the average Soviet spoke as little as possible about the MVD, it was obvious that he had great fear and respect for the powers of this institution. For example, a rather heated argument once developed among shoppers at the Gorodomlya magazin. Someone was evidently trying to push his way into line. The magazin director called up the local MVD political agent and asked for assistance. When the latter arrived on the scene, the Soviets in the shop immediately ceased their argument and meekly re-formed their line. Although the man did not say a word, it became so quiet one could hear a pin drop.

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9. The Soviet population obviously doubted the veracity of some aspects of Soviet propaganda concerning foreign relations.

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[redacted] Outside on the street, a public loud speaker was blaring out the latest news announcing that a highly successful harvest of wheat was just completed in the USSR. The man remarked [redacted] "It is certainly odd that we have just harvested so many tons of wheat and that 'people are starving in America' and, yet, we can't buy any bread in the shops. They should stop their stupid lies." [redacted] we were then suffering from a bread shortage in Ostashkov. Another indication of disbelief of Soviet news sources was the fact that many Soviet employees frequently repeated the rumors that ZHDANOV and DMITROV had met unnatural deaths.

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10. The Soviet citizenry lived in an abounding fear of a new world war. [redacted] literally shook from fear when hostilities broke out in Korea. They expected almost every day that the Soviet Union would be drawn into the war.

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11. The intensive propaganda directed by Soviet authorities against the United States evidently had some effect, as many Soviets spoke as if they believed that the United States was an aggressive state, a country where oppression of the working masses reigned free. Some people thought that the United States would launch an attack on the USSR and some thought otherwise, but almost everyone feared another war, a repetition of the terrible hunger and privation suffered during World War II. However, several incidents mentioned earlier indicated that, undoubtedly, many Soviets failed to believe official accusations that the United States had aggressive intentions toward the USSR.

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[redacted] She once admitted [redacted] confidentially that life would be so much better if only the Americans would come.

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12. Comments by Soviet citizens on such developments as the Marshall Plan, NATO, and EDC were seldom if ever heard, nor was much said about such noteworthy developments as the atomic explosion in the USSR, the Soviet peace appeals, and the supposed West German army. Presumably these points were too sensitive to be discussed with Germans or with strangers. Possibly the average Soviet simply lacked the necessary time or money to be a regular reader of newspapers.

Soviet Reaction to Foreign Radio Broadcasts

13. [redacted] many Soviet radio owners at Branch No. 1, [redacted] engineers and other persons in leading positions, frequently listened to Western radio stations, including VOA Russian-language programs, RIAS, and NWDR (Nordwest-Deutscher Rundfunk). Numerous incidents may be cited [redacted] 25X1
14. KHUTORYANSKIY, an MVD official in charge of the "secret" section (Section 1) at Branch No. 1, was one of the most faithful listeners to Western broadcasts. He lived in an apartment building which was occupied mainly by German specialists. His neighbors [redacted] frequently heard through the thin walls VOA and RIAS transmissions on KHUTORYANSKIY'S radio. 25X1
15. Another amusing incident occurred when a German specialist visited VASILYEV, the chief engineer at Branch No. 1, in his office on official business. VASILYEV, KHUTORYANSKIY, and CHERNOPYATOV (chief of the radio laboratory) were then conferring behind closed doors in VASILYEV'S office. The German knocked and was told to come in. He was surprised to discover on entering that the three were listening to a VOA Russian-language broadcast dealing with the subject of state capitalism. They had either forgotten to turn off the radio or else had expected someone else. At any rate, they tried to make a joke about the whole matter, saying to the effect that "these silly Americans are trying to make us believe that we have state capitalism". However, it was clear that this was simply a clumsy fabrication, an attempt to hide their real intentions.
16. On another occasion, [redacted] VASILYEV at a party given for Soviet and German specialists. The German orchestra was playing the song, "Rosa von Woerthersee", [redacted] surprised to hear that VASILYEV knew the lyrics perfectly. As this song was never played by East Zone radio stations but only in Western Germany, [redacted] how it was that he knew the song so well. VASILYEV then answered, somewhat abashed, that he had heard the song played on Radio Leipzig. The man was obviously lying. 25X1
17. Also indicative of Soviet interest in hearing Western radio broadcasts was their great interest in buying, from German specialists, second-hand radios equipped with short wave reception. This was true not only of Soviet engineers but also of workers who had little money for such luxury items. Also indicative was the fact that many Soviet employees knew of news events in the West which were not publicized in Soviet information media. For example, CHERNOPYATOV, [redacted] laboratory director, 25X1

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frequently discussed reports of "flying saucers" in the United States although these were not carried in the Soviet press.

18. Many Soviet engineers at Branch No. 1 brought their radios to [] to be repaired or adjusted. It was noteworthy that they were always interested in improving or correcting short wave reception. [] most, if not all, of these radio owners listened to broadcasts from the West as, of course, few Soviet stations transmit on short wave bands. Again, KHUTORYANSKIY was one [] regular customers and was particularly demanding about his radio's short wave reception.

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19. The Vostok, Baltika, and VEF radios were the most popular models among the Soviet employees at Branch No. 1. Most radio owners were, of course, engineers and other high paid personnel, as few Soviet workers could afford such a luxury. []

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20. [] radio [] was practically the only available form of amusement on Gorodomlya. The BBC German-language broadcasts were the most popular among the German specialists. It was a daily routine [] to listen to evening news from BBC. The BBC German broadcasts and RIAS were not jammed and were clearly received.

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21. It was quite a game [] to see which Western broadcasts, especially VOA, succeeded in breaking through Soviet jamming efforts. At Gorodomlya, the VOA Russian-language broadcasts always escaped jamming on at least one short wave length. [] cannot identify the exact wave lengths, as they were changed so often. These switching tactics on the part of VOA broadcasters evidently caused Soviet jammers considerable difficulty. They sometimes jammed the VOA German broadcasts by mistake for one or two minutes when searching for the wave lengths of Soviet broadcasts.

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[] Comments: The [] conviction that a far smaller percentage of the Soviet population are supporters of the regime than has been indicated [] is the most striking feature of [] comments on Soviet political attitudes.

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The [] indications of a large listening audience (relative to the number of radio owners) of VOA Russian-language broadcasts are of equal interest. Certainly a large percentage of the Soviet intelligentsia listen to radio broadcasts from the West if such persons as KHUTORYANSKIY (MGB officer) and VASILYEV [] as an avid member of the Party) are regular listeners. Also noteworthy is the [] claim that at least one VOA Russian-language broadcasting channel consistently broke through Soviet jamming efforts in the Ostashkov area.

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